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Cover: Western Grebe on Broadford Reservoir, June 11, 1981
Photo by Craig Phillips

MARYLAND BIRDLIFE

December 1981 Maryland Birdlife Volume 37, No. 4

FIRST DOCUMENTED SIGHTING OF WESTERN GREBE IN MARYLAND

Fran Pope

At about 1700 on June 11, 1981, I noticed a large bird doing easy surface dives on Broadford Reservoir, a small lake northeast of Mountain Lake Park in Garrett County, Maryland. When I examined it with binoculars, I was surprised to see it was a Western Grebe (Aechmophorus occidentalis), which I had known years ago in Colorado. Checking the bird more closely with my telescope, I was sure of the identity and hurried off to find a telephone and a photographer. Other birders were alerted before I rushed back to the reservoir. The bird was still in the same area.

It was preening when Craig Phillips, the photographer arrived. He tried taking pictures from shore, but felt he should try to get closer to the bird. We asked some fishermen in a boat with an electric motor to help, and they gave Craig a ride to the bird. It seemed cautious of the boat, but not at all 'spooky' and allowed the boat to follow it slowly in circles while Craig took pictures. At one point, as the boat followed the grebe across the lake, the boat stopped. Almost immediately, the grebe did too, and turned toward the boat as if to question why it had stopped.

I left at about 1800 and returned in 20 minutes. The grebe was in the same area as originally seen, diving occasionally and appearing unhurried. When I returned at about 0700 the next morning the grebe was gone.

Mountain Lake Park, Md.





Fran Pope, Sallie Thayer, Ellen Ruhl, and Syd Loy watching Western Grebe
Photos by Craig Phillips

GREAT CORMORANT IN CAROLINE COUNTY

Eddie Slaughter

When my husband, Chris, and I were scanning the Choptank River at Martinak State Park on March 7, 1981, we came upon a single cormorant, perched on a channel marker some 350 to 400 meters distant. The bird was facing up river, presenting a right profile view. We put our 30 power scope on it, and saw that it was an immature.

The bird was perched in the typical S curve position, wings folded. It looked brown above; the gular pouch appeared dull yellow, bordered by white on the cheek, chin and upper throat; the bulge of the neck and breast was dark, the belly whitish with some brownish flecks along the flanks.

We went back to our car for field guides (!). When we returned, the bird was not perched, but was circling around to return to the marker. Upon alighting, it stretched its neck forward several times (in a position similar to a gull "long-calling"), and may have emitted a call, as I heard a sort of croaking sound, but wasn't sure that it was coming from the cormorant. Or it may have been trying to swallow a stuck fish!

We left the southernmost point of land at the mouth of Watts Creek from which we had been viewing the bird, and walked up to the area which was to have been the public swimming beach to try to get a better look at the front of the bird. From that vantage point we were able to get a better than three-quarters view (though looking almost into the setting sun), and saw clearly the contrast between the dark breast and the whitish belly. We could also see the number 7 on the channel marker.

Upon returning home, I consulted Bent and *Seabirds* by Bryan Nelson. It is stated in Bent that Great Cormorants need three or four years to acquire adult plumage. Nelson says four or five years, occasionally three, to breed.

As this bird had considerable white on cheek, chin and upper throat, a dark lower neck and breast, and a belly that was whitish as far down as we could see, I concluded that it was probably a sub-adult Great Cormorant.

The next morning, I called Steve Westre of Caroline County, whom I had met by chance earlier on the previous day, to ask if he or anyone else had seen the cormorant. He had not, though he had seen many Double-cresteds there the previous fall. Subsequently, he and a number of other Caroline County birders saw the bird perched on the same channel marker in excellent morning sunlight. He concurred that it was, he thought, a sub-adult Great Cormorant.

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RESULTS OF THE WINTER BIRD-POPULATION STUDY AT "ADVENTURE," 1973-1981

James R. Wilkinson

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents the results of a Winter Bird-population Study conducted at the Adventure MOS Sanctuary near Potomac, Maryland, from 1973 to 1981. These results show the average and yearly relative abundance of all species recorded, the effect of harsh winters on the local birdlife, and the consequences of long-term habitat change on the numbers of certain species.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND CENSUS METHOD

The study site, which includes most of the Adventure Sanctuary, is 88 acres (35.6 hectares) of upland and flood plain hardwoods, upland meadow with hedgerows, and a few small groves of Virginia Pine. It is located on the Piedmont of Maryland (Montgomery County) not far from the Fall Line, and encompasses part of the valley of Watts Branch, a tributary of the Potomac River. For a detailed description and photographs, the reader is referred to the article by Richard Bray in the December, 1979 issue of *Maryland Birdlife* (35:88-97).

Individual counts averaged three to four hours on foot, following the route laid out in 1973 by John Norvell. He conducted the first census and compiled the results for most years of the study. There was an average of six counts per year. Most started between 0700 and 0900 and finished by 1300. All censuses were made from the second half of December to mid-February so that most late fall and early spring migrants would be excluded from the yearly results. For several years the first count of the season coincided with the Seneca Christmas Count, Adventure being located in the eastern part of the Count circle.

I used the annual summaries printed in *American Birds* (Vols. 27-32) and field sheets from later years to find relative abundance of all species observed on the Adventure winter bird study. The results for each year were averaged for each species to get the mean number of individual birds per 100 acres (the figure used for Winter Bird-population Studies published in *American Birds*). Species then were listed in order from the largest eight-year mean to the smallest, thus showing those birds likely to be seen in large numbers every winter as well as those that might be observed only once. I also listed total birds per 100 acres, total birds per square kilometer, total species, and the number of censuses taken each year (species only seen flying over the study tract were omitted). As there was just a single count in 1981 (no yearly averages could be obtained), species were recorded as being present or absent.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the Adventure Winter Bird-population Study are presented in Table 1. The five most abundant species during the survey were the Starling, Carolina Chickadee, Common Crow, Cardinal and White-throated Sparrow. Blue Jays had a fairly high eight-year mean but numbers fluctuated from year to year, the result of dependence on a variable resource (acorns) for winter foraging (Robbins and Bystrak, 1974). Eastern Bluebirds were recorded every year except 1976, with the highest average of six occurring in 1980. Coveys of Bobwhite were seen in 1973, 1974 and 1976 but were not observed since. Species at the northern limit of their wintering ranges, such as the American Woodcock, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Rufous-sided Towhee, were each observed once (the woodcock was flushed by John Norvell from a brushy spot on the Watts Branch flood plain in 1974). The Winter Wren, also at the edge of its winter distribution, was present every year except 1978 and 1979. The only Black-capped Chickadees on the study were counted in 1976, a winter marked by a large invasion of this species into central Maryland. Small numbers of raptors were recorded every year, the rarest being a Cooper's Hawk in 1977, a Northern Harrier in 1978, and a Great Horned Owl in 1975.

The effect of mild and severe winters on total birds and selected species can also be seen by looking at Table 1. The relatively mild seasons of 1973-76 had an average of 173 total birds per 100 acres and featured the appearance of such semihardy species as American Woodcock, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Rufous-sided Towhee. Carolina Wrens reached their highest yearly average of nine birds in 1976. The largest number of total species for the entire study (39) and the most total birds per 100 acres (200) were recorded in 1975. The harsh winters of 1977 and 1978, in contrast, had an average of 90 total birds including more Evening Grosbeaks, Purple Finches and Tree Sparrows than were usually counted. Species totals did not decline along with the decrease in population density, however.

Carolina Wrens were much reduced in 1977 and 1978 from earlier totals; an average of three was recorded in 1977 and one in 1978 and 1979. The two-bird average in 1980 and the four birds counted on a single 1981 survey suggest a slow recovery. One or two Belted Kingfishers were seen annually along Watts Branch except in 1977 when extreme cold caused the stream to freeze over for a long period, forcing the birds to find other fishing grounds. In 1978, long-lasting snow cover was probably responsible for the low numbers of Dark-eyed Juncos and White-throated Sparrows along with the disappearance of Winter Wrens. All three species find food and shelter on the ground, in low brush and around logs; access to such habitats would have been very limited that winter. Winter Wrens were not observed in 1979 but returned in the less-snowy seasons of 1980 and 1981. White-throats and juncos recovered in 1979 but the high number of the former in that year was partly the result of survey methods (there were only two counts, both in early winter). The many Yellow-rumped Warblers in 1979 can be explained in the same way. In addition to the weather-induced stresses on bird populations at Adventure in 1977-78, there was predation by Sharp-shinned Hawks (seen

Table 1. Birds per 100 Acres in Deciduous Wooded Stream Valley and Meadow ("Adventure"). Species Listed in Order of Decreasing Abundance.

Species	8-yr. mean	1973	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81[1]
Starling	25	69	17	22	31	10	5	34	10	X
Carolina Chickadee	15	22	14	24	18	11	8	15	10	X
Common Crow	13	10	14	27	13	14	9	9	9	X
Cardinal	13	16	9	17	11	11	11	17	10	X
White-thr. Sparrow	13	9	19	8	11	11	6	34	6	X
Dark-eyed Junco	8	3	17	5	17	6	3	8	8	X
Song Sparrow	7	6	9	11	5	5	5	7	6	X
Blue Jay	5	8	1	14	5	3	1	6	2	X
Field Sparrow	5	3	2	3	9	6	6	5	6	X
Tufted Titmouse	4	8	3	7	6	3	3	2	3	X
Carolina Wren	4	5	2	8	9	3	1	1	2	X
Downy Woodpecker	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	5	3	X
Eastern Bluebird	3	1	3	5	--	1	5	2	6	X
Bobwhite	2	6	6	--	2	--	--	--	--	--
Red-bellied Woodpecker	2	2	1	3	2	2	1	2	2	X
White-br. Nuthatch	2	3	2	2	2	+	1	+	2	X
Mockingbird	2	+	1	1	3	2	2	2	3	X
Yellow-rumped Warbler	2	--	--	2	+	+	+	11	2	X
American Goldfinch	2	+	+	7	+	1	2	3	3	X
Mourning Dove	1	2	+	+	1	+	3	--	3	X
Common Flicker	1	+	+	2	+	+	1	6	2	X
Pileated Woodpecker	1	1	1	2	1	+	+	+	1	--
Brown Creeper	1	1	+	1	1	--	+	--	2	X
Golden-cr. Kinglet	1	1	3	+	4	+	+	--	1	X
House Sparrow	1	1	+	--	2	3	1	1	3	X
Brown-headed Cowbird	1	+	--	5	--	--	+	--	+	--
Purple Finch	1	5	--	--	--	+	2	1	+	X
Turkey Vulture	+	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	--
Sharp-shinned Hawk	+	--	+	--	+	+	+	+	--	--
Cooper's Hawk	+	--	--	--	--	+	--	--	--	--
Red-tailed Hawk	+	--	+	+	+	+	1	+	+	--
Red-shouldered Hawk	+	1	+	+	+	+	1	1	+	--
Northern Harrier	+	--	--	--	--	--	+	--	--	--
American Kestrel	+	--	--	--	--	--	--	+	--	--
Am. Woodcock	+	--	+	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Rock Dove	+	--	--	+	--	--	--	--	--	--
Great-horned Owl	+	--	--	+	--	--	--	--	--	--
Barred Owl	+	--	+	+	+	+	+	--	--	--
Belted Kingfisher	+	+	+	+	+	--	+	+	+	--
Yellow-bel. Sapsucker	+	--	--	+	+	+	--	1	--	--
Hairy Woodpecker	+	+	1	+	+	+	+	+	+	X
Fish Crow	+	--	--	--	--	--	+	--	--	--
Black-cap. Chickadee	+	--	--	--	+	--	--	--	--	--
Winter Wren	+	+	+	+	+	+	--	--	+	X
American Robin	+	+	--	+	--	--	--	--	--	--
Hermit Thrush	+	--	--	+	--	--	--	+	--	--
Ruby-cr. Kinglet	+	+	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Cedar Waxwing	+	--	--	--	--	--	--	3	--	--
Common Grackle	+	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	--
Evening Grosbeak	+	--	--	--	--	+	+	--	--	--
Rufous-sided Towhee	+	--	--	+	--	--	--	--	--	--
Tree Sparrow	+	--	--	3	--	+	+	--	--	--
Swamp Sparrow	+	+	+	--	--	+	1	--	--	--
Total birds/100 acres	145	186	145	200	161	97	83	177	113	--
Total birds/sq. km.	359	461	359	494	399	239	205	437	279	--
Total species	34	33	33	39	33	35	37	31	31	26
Number of counts	6	7	7	8	7	6	7	2	5	1

1. In 1981 there was one census so results are for comparison only. 'X' means a species was present.

both years) and Cooper's Hawk (observed in 1977).

Although variation in winter populations of most birds at Adventure was caused by changes in weather or food supply, the disappearance of Bobwhite and Swamp Sparrow was probably the result of habitat loss. Both species were found in brushy areas along the sewer line next to Watts Branch (Swamp Sparrows were also observed in marshy spots along the sewer right-of-way). During the course of the study, natural succession replaced the thickets and marsh with a dense growth of young trees, forcing the above species away from the flood plain. There is now very little suitable habitat for either bird at the sanctuary although Bobwhite used the brushy meadow edges until many of these were cleared by adjacent property owners (the densest cover was just over the northern boundary of the sanctuary and was removed in the mid-1970s).

CONCLUSION

More winter bird surveys are needed to document future habitat and weather changes as they affect Adventure's birds. Counts in the next few years should help plot the recovery of species whose populations were reduced during the hard winters of the late 1970s. Regular winter and breeding bird studies, combined with the excellent spring and fall banding program, will give an accurate picture of the avifauna at Adventure.

LITERATURE CITED

Robbins, C. S. and D. Bystrak. 1974. Winter Bird Survey of Central Maryland, U.S.A. Acta Ornithologica 14: 254-271.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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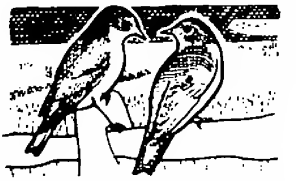


INDIA-NEPAL: Jan., 1983. Spectacular birding and natural history tour with **Bob Fleming, Jr.**, co-author of *Birds of Nepal.*

CHINA: May-June, 1983. Join the first American group to bird far northeastern marshes and forests. Leader, **Don Messersmith** scouted the area in 1982 and found a great variety of little known eastern Asian species. A separate natural history and cultural tour will follow.

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THE SEASON

BREEDING SEASON, JUNE 1 - JULY 31, 1981

Robert F. Ringler

Most birds seemed to enjoy a good breeding season as June temperatures averaged 1.65° above normal and precipitation was well-distributed throughout the month, averaging about one inch above normal with higher concentrations in the western and northern parts of the State. In July both temperature and precipitation were near normal with most of the latter in the first and fourth weeks of the month, separated by two weeks of hot, dry weather.

Contributors: Harry Armistead, Rick Blom, Larry Bonham, Dan Boone, David Czaplak, Ethel Engle, Inez Glime, Bill and Floyd Hayes, Hank Kaestner, Alicia Knotts, Walter Kraus, Paul Leifer, Chris Ludwig, Mariana Nuttle, Carl Perry, Fran Pope, Jan Reese, Mike Resch, Eddie Slaughter, Jim Stasz, David Wallace, Robert Warfield, Hal Wierenga, and Erika Wilson.

Loons, Grebes, Cormorants. A Common Loon was present on Broadford Reservoir into June (Pope). Another was seen flying north over Assateague Island on June 7 (Sam Dyke) and one was in the District of Columbia on June 21 (Czaplak). Fran Pope found a dark-phase Western Grebe on Broadford Reservoir, June 11; details will be given in a separate article. A Pied-billed Grebe was in Howard County near Laurel through June 7 (Leifer) and may have nested. Double-crested Cormorants are being seen with increasing frequency during the summer. Most, if not all, of these are presumed to be non-breeders lingering in our area rather than migrants to and from the breeding range. This year's sightings were 45 at Barren Island, June 6 (Armistead), one near Cumberland, June 5 (Ken Hodgdon), 56 in Southern Dorchester County, June 20 (Armistead, Perry) of which 21 were at Holland Island, 32 at Bloodsworth Island, and 3 at Adam Island; 1 was at Sandy Pt. from June 23 through the end of the period (Wierenga), 2 in the Elliott Island marshes on June 24, 3 at Ocean City on June 25, and 5 at Assateague, June 25-26 (Resch).

Herons, Ibis. Harry Armistead makes regular surveys of colonial nesting birds on the islands in the lower part of Chesapeake Bay. See Table 1 for his 1981 summary compared to last year. Evidence of the post-breeding dispersal of herons began with a Great Blue Heron at Seneca on July 12 (Wilson), 15 at Sandy Pt. on the 19th (Wierenga), and 15 at Lilypons on the 30th (Wallace). Three Cattle Egrets were flying over the Belfast Valley, June 6 (Kaestner), one was at Ft. McHenry the same day

(Bielenberg), and Reese estimated 250 near Bozman June 8. Three Great Egrets were in Baltimore on July 18 (Ringler) and Warfield counted 355 at West Ocean City on July 25. A Snowy Egret at Ft. McHenry, May 31 to June 8 (Bielenberg), was out of place. Jon Boone watched 6 Black-crowned Night Herons calling and flying in to roost at Oakland Mills near Columbia on June 15. An adult Yellow-crowned Night Heron was near Finksburg, Carroll Co., June 28 (Ringler). Paul Leifer found a Least Bittern in Howard County near Laurel on June 14, and one was seen at Lake Elkhorn near Columbia on June 2 (Ludwig) for another rare occurrence in that county. Less surprising was a Least Bittern at Hughes Hollow above Seneca on July 11-12 (Wilson, et al.). Armistead counted 17 Glossy Ibis at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, June 6.

Table 1. Estimated Breeding Pairs of Herons and Ibis Dorchester County Islands, 1981 (1980 totals in parentheses)

	Bloodsworth		Holland		Adam		Barren	
Great Blue Heron	101	(125)	41	(30)	7	(10)	100	(65)
Green Heron	8	(5)	1	(2)	1	(3)	?	(?)
Little Blue Heron	0	(0)	1	(0)	1	(5)	0	(0)
Cattle Egret	0	(0)	1	(0)	0	(5)	0	(0)
Great Egret	6	(0)	8	(30)	1	(0)	15	(20)
Snowy Egret	0	(5)	1	(0)	1	(5)	0	(0)
Louisiana Heron	0	(0)	1	(0)	0	(5)	0	(0)
Black-crowned Night Heron	5	(3)	50	(40)	20	(35)	0	(0)
Yellow-crowned Night Heron	0	(2)	9	(30)	1	(1)	0	(0)
Glossy Ibis	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(5)	0	(0)
Total	120	(140)	113	(132)	32	(74)	115	(85)

The Barren Island count was made on June 6, 1981 and the other islands were done on June 20, 1981.

Waterfowl. Canada Geese continue to proliferate as breeders throughout the State, particularly on upland ponds and lakes. Sightings this summer were 15 at Tanyard, June 3 (Engle), a pair with 5 large young and another pair with 4 downy young on the Beaver Run branch of Liberty Lake, June 6 (Ringler, Blom), 87 at Blackwater the same day including broods of 2, 2, and 6 (Wilson, Armistead), 19 flying over Junior Nature Camp at Camp Hashawha, Carroll Co., June 7 (Stasz, et al.), a pair with 3 young at Herrington Manor, Garrett Co., June 22 (Slaughter), 3 adults at Wolf Swamp, June 25 (Wilkinson), and 2 pairs with broods of four and three on the C & O Canal at Bear Island, June 28 (Wilson). Summering, but non-breeding waterfowl included 2 Whistling Swans at Kent Island, June 5 (Jackson Abbott), and 2 subadults at Barren Island, June 6 (Armistead), 2 Brant at Assateague, June 14 (F. Hayes, Czaplak), a Northern Shoveler at Lake Kittamaqundi in Columbia, May 23 through June 20 (Ludwig), a Canvasback at Elliott Island, June 7 (Wilson, et al.) and 2 drakes in Baltimore harbor, July 18 (Ringler, Stasz), a drake Lesser Scaup at Masonville, June 7 (Ringler), a drake Black Scoter at Ocean City, June 26 (Resch), a drake Ruddy Duck at Masonville, June 7 (Ringler), and a female Red-breasted Merganser at Assateague, June 14 (F. Hayes,

Czaplak) and June 26 (Resch). A hen Mallard was sitting on a nest with 5 eggs at Masonville within a few feet of a bulldozer's work on June 7 (Ringler) and a female with 4 young was in Wolf Swamp, June 29 (Wilkinson). Armistead counted 19 Black Ducks at Barren Island on June 6 and 6 at Bloodsworth Island on the 20th. Also on the latter date he and Perry flushed a female Gadwall from a nest with 8 eggs on Spring Island, a small marsh island east of Holland Island, the first breeding record for Dorchester's offshore islands. Armistead also found a drake Blue-winged Teal on June 6 at Barren Island where they are not known to nest. Knotts counted 8 young Wood Ducks at Denton on June 24.

Diurnal Raptors. Late migrants at Ft. Smallwood were 7 Turkey Vultures and a Red-tailed Hawk June 5, 112 Broad-winged Hawks on the 4th and 2 later ones on the 16th, an immature Bald Eagle on the 9th, and 4 Ospreys on the 5th (Wierenga). On June 2 Jim Paulus saw a Black Vulture soaring over Oldtown, where the species is unknown in summer. The highest count of Black Vultures for the season was 85 at Lilypons, July 19 (Wallace). An adult Cooper's Hawk was at Big Sampson Rock, Garrett Co., June 21 (Slaughter). Fran Pope found a Red-tailed Hawk nest with two young near Gortner on May 16. Debbie Mignogno observed an immature Broad-winged Hawk in Somerset County, July 23-26, and found a roadkill in the area on Aug. 8. Broad-wings are rare breeders on the Eastern Shore. Reese reports that five Bald Eagle nests in Talbot County all produced young, a total of 7 birds. An immature Bald Eagle was observed at Barren Island on June 6 (Armistead) and another at Tanyard on June 17 (Engle). Engle also reported two fledglings at a nest elsewhere in Caroline County. Wierenga found the nest of a Northern Harrier with 4 young in the Elliott Island marshes, June 14. Pope noted an Osprey over Broadford Reservoir, June 27. Wierenga saw a Peregrine Falcon near Laytonsville, July 30. American Kestrels are probably rare breeders on the Eastern Shore as noted by one seen at Blackwater, June 6 (Wilson), a male at Bozman, June 20 (Reese), and one along Rt. 135 in Wicomico County, July 31 (Mignogno). Bielenberg saw his first migrant at Ft. McHenry on July 23, perhaps a post-breeding wanderer from somewhere in Baltimore city.

Grouse, Turkey, Rails. Wilkinson saw a female Ruffed Grouse with 10 young two miles east of Cumberland on June 1. The Hayes' found a female Wild Turkey on a nest with 13 eggs at Gambrill State Park, May 23, and Pope saw a female with 7 young west of Friendsville, July 26. On June 6 in the Elliott Island marshes Wierenga counted 2 King Rails, a Clapper Rail, 8 Virginia Rails, and a Black Rail. Reese heard 3 Virginia Rails at Windyhill on July 4. Wierenga found Black Rails in two locations at Sandy Pt. through June 23. Leifer found a Common Gallinule nest with 8 eggs in Howard County near Laurel, June 21. An American Coot at Hughes Hollow on July 5 (Bonham) was unusual in summer.

Oystercatchers and Plovers. Three American Oystercatcher nests were reported this year: one with 3 eggs on Barren Island, June 6 (Armistead), one with 2 eggs on an island off Assateague, June 14 (Hayes, Czaplak), and another with 2 eggs on Holland Island, June 20 (Armistead, Perry); 4 adults were seen on Spring Island on June 20. A late Semipal-

mated Plover was at Kent Narrows on June 4 (Blom); 3 early fall birds were at the same location on July 25 (Ringler, Pete Webb), 2 at Sandy Pt. on July 27 (Wierenga), and 1 in Allegany County at the rouge lagoon in North Branch on the latter date (Paulus). Resch found 3 Wilson's Plovers on Assateague, June 26. An adult Killdeer with 3 young was near Mountain Lake Park, May 16 (Pope). Hayes and Czaplak found 10 Piping Plovers on Assateague on June 14, and Resch counted 42 including young on June 26. A Black-bellied Plover was on Barren Island, June 6 (Armistead), 10 were on Assateague, June 14 (Hayes, Czaplak), and one was there on the 26th (Resch); another was at Sandy Pt., July 27 (Wierenga).

Sandpipers. Sam Dyke estimated 100 Whimbrels on Assateague on June 1, and the first of the southbound birds appeared there on July 5. Warfield noted his first Whimbrel at West Ocean City on July 21. Two Upland Sandpipers in the Belfast Valley on June 1 (Kaestner) were probably late migrants. Lesser Yellowlegs appeared in mid-summer, with singles on Assateague, June 26 (Resch), at Lilypons, June 28 (Michael Welch), and at Sandy Pt., July 1 (Wierenga). Jim Clark found 4 Willets on Hog Island at Patuxent Naval Air Station, June 3, Wilson counted 14 in the Elliott Island marshes, June 7, nests with 4 eggs each were found on Barren Island on June 6 (Armistead) and in two nests on an island off Assateague, June 14 (Hayes, Czaplak). Resch estimated 290 Willets on Assateague on June 26, Warfield noted his first migrant at West Ocean City on July 3, and Kraus reported one in the Calvert County marshes from July 12 to Aug. 5. Early migrant Spotted Sandpipers were at West Ocean City on July 6 (Warfield) and (2 birds) at Sandy Pt. on the 15th (Wierenga). Clark saw a Ruddy Turnstone at Patuxent NAS on June 3, Armistead counted 21 on Barren Island on June 6, and Resch found 5 on Assateague, June 26. There were 20 Short-billed Dowitchers on Assateague, June 14 (Hayes, Czaplak), 2 on Holland Island, June 20 (Armistead, Perry), 1 at Sandy Pt., July 1 (Wierenga), 1 at West Ocean City, July 5 (Warfield), and 1 at Back River, July 19 (Stasz, Resch). Armistead found a Red Knot on Barren Island, June 6, and 7 were on Assateague, June 14 (Hayes, Czaplak). Clark found a Sanderling at Patuxent NAS on June 3, and five were at Sandy Pt. July 19 (Wierenga). The following Semipalmated Sandpipers were tallied: 8 at Masonville, June 7 (Ringler); on Assateague, 325 on June 11 (Claudia Wilds), 35 on the 14th (Hayes, Czaplak), and 1 on the 26th (Resch); 4 at Sandy Pt., July 21 (Wierenga), and 1 at Kent Narrows, July 25 (Ringler, Webb). A Western Sandpiper was at Sandy Pt., July 19 (Wierenga). Two Least Sandpipers were at Lilypons on June 28 (Michael Welch). White-rumped Sandpipers were widely reported in June, with 1 at the rouge lagoon in North Branch, June 4 (Paulus), 2 at Blackwater and 4 on Barren Island on the 6th (Armistead), 28 on Assateague on the 11th (Wilds) with 3 there on the 14th (Hayes, Czaplak), and 1 on Holland Island on the 20th (Armistead, Perry). A late Dunlin was on Barren Island on June 6 (Armistead). As we can easily see from this mass of summer records the shorebird migration is never at an end during the summer months. Nearly all of these reports are of non-breeding birds, yet it is often difficult to separate "spring" from "fall" migrants at this time. Perhaps many of these birds are too young to breed and are just wandering about for the summer.

Gulls. Armistead counted 117 Greater Black-backed Gulls at Barren

Island on June 6 and Wierenga noted his first 4 returnees to Sandy Pt. on July 19. Other returning gulls at the latter site were 4 Herring Gulls on July 27, 5 Ring-billed Gulls on July 15, and 3 Laughing Gulls on July 27. Armistead estimated 695 Herring Gulls on Barren Island on June 6 but he could find only 10 nests, one a scrape with no eggs, six with 3 eggs, and three with 2 eggs. Wierenga noticed an all-white Ring-billed Gull summering at Sandy Pt. Hayes and Czaplak estimated 200 nests of Laughing Gulls on a small island off Assateague, June 14, with about 80% containing 3 eggs and 20% 2 eggs. Bielenberg noted the first Laughing Gull returning to Baltimore harbor at Ft. McHenry on July 28; the last spring bird had departed on June 6. For the third consecutive year a Franklin's Gull summered in the vicinity of Sandy Pt. Wierenga saw a subadult there on July 24 and 29. The plumage was composed of juvenile wings, almost full black hood, and thick white eye-ring. A late Bonaparte's Gull flew by Ft. Smallwood on June 4 (Wierenga).

Terns, Skimmer. Three Gull-billed Terns were seen at Assateague on June 14 (Hayes, Czaplak) and 2 on the 26th (Resch). On Barren Island Armistead counted 29 Forster's Tern nests, 13 empty, one with 1 egg, and 15 with 3 eggs on June 6. On Bloodsworth Island on June 20 he and Perry counted 43 nests, mostly on the big fishing weir on the east side of the island. The Barren Island location is the farthest north that Forster's Terns have nested in the bay. Armistead also reported that Common Terns made the best showing ever in Dorchester County with two new and record-sized colonies. On June 6 on a marsh island at Barren Island he counted 149 nests, 6 with 1 egg, 42 with 2 eggs, 99 with 3 eggs, and 2 with 4 eggs. The other colony, on Spring Island, contained 141 nests on June 20: 12 empty, 23 with 1 egg, 29 with 2 eggs, 68 with 3 eggs, 3 with 1 egg and 1 young, 1 with 2 eggs and 1 young, 3 with 1 young, 1 with 2 young, and 1 with 3 young. On June 6 Wilson noted about 30 Little Terns at the old high school in Cambridge. On the same date Armistead found 55 adults on Barren Island and 7 nests: 3 with 1 egg and 4 with 2 eggs. Resch reported hundreds of Little Terns nesting at the north end of Assateague, June 26. Armistead commented that Royal Terns made a good showing in Dorchester this summer, with 9 at Barren Island, June 6; and on June 20 there were 14 at Holland Island, 8 at Bloodsworth Island, 5 at Adam Island, and 1 at Spring Island. Wilson noted 3 at Elliott, June 7, and John Weske and John Buckalew in surveying Royal Tern breeding colonies found 28 nests on the Cedar Islands, June 11 and 7 nests just north of South Point on June 28. Both of these Worcester County colonies were unsuccessful as of the dates indicated. Armistead spotted a Sandwich Tern over the mixed tern colony on Barren Island, June 6, a first for the Maryland portion of the bay. Resch saw 2 adult Sandwich Terns on Assateague, June 26. Among the summer records for Caspian Terns were 1 at Barren Island, June 6 (Armistead), 1 on Assateague, June 26 (Resch), 2 at the mouth of Baltimore harbor, July 12 (Kaestner), 3 at Oxford, July 28 (Reese, Terry Allen), and 1 to 4 all summer at Sandy Pt. (Wierenga). Warfield observed a Black Tern at West Ocean, July 25. Armistead reported 85 Black Skimmers on Adam Island, June 20; the previous record count in Dorchester County was only 7. All of Armistead's June 20 counts were made with Carl Perry.

Cuckoos, Owls. Wierenga and others noted Yellow-billed Cuckoos to be more common in the second half of July. Woody Martin observed young Black-billed Cuckoos just out of the nest at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center near Laurel on July 30. A Barn Owl nest at Edgemere contained 3 young on May 23 (Ringler). An adult Great Horned Owl and a large downy young out of the nest were on Carroll Island, May 16 (Blom, Ringler). A nearly full-grown Great Horned Owl was near Gamber, Carroll County, on June 28 (Ringler). On June 21 a sick male Long-eared Owl was found in a yard near Royal Oak, Talbot Co.; it died the same day. Reese reports that the gonads were small, but the occurrence may suggest breeding.

Woodpeckers, Flycatchers. Additional sightings of Pileated Woodpeckers on the central Eastern Shore were singles near Easton on June 21 (Reese, Terry Allen) and at Federalsburg on July 31 (Glime). Reese also found a Red-headed Woodpecker at St. Michaels daily, June 1-13, apparently examining prospective nest sites but showing no further evidence. Bielenberg reported the first migrant Downy Woodpecker of the season on July 28 at Ft. McHenry where the species does not nest. Wierenga relates the following incident which occurred in the Elliott Island marshes June 14 when an Eastern Kingbird harrassed a perched Red-tailed Hawk for several minutes and "as the hawk finally took flight, the kingbird landed at the base of the hawk's neck and rode piggy-back for at least ten seconds and about 100 yards until the hawk dove into another clump of trees. During the flight the kingbird was not using its wings, appeared to be hanging on by its feet and/or bill, and resisted at least two attempts by the hawk to shake it off in mid-air. Wierenga also noted the first southbound kingbirds, with 3 at Sandy Pt. on July 29. On June 20, Armistead and Perry saw a Great Crested Flycatcher on Holland Island, possibly a new breeding species for that island. A pair of Alder Flycatchers apparently nested near Monkton in Baltimore County as they were present at least from May 30 through July 18 (Ringler, Blom, et al.). Another was singing at Herrington Manor in June (Bonham). A Least Flycatcher nest with young was in the Pleasant Valley of Garrett County south of Gortner, July 4 (Stasz, et al.). An Eastern Pewee at Ft. McHenry on June 1 (Bielenberg) was a late migrant. A singing Olive-sided Flycatcher summered at Finzel Swamp in Garrett County but no other evidence of nesting was found (Robbins, et al.).

Swallows. Late spring migrants at Ft. Smallwood were 3 Bank Swallows on June 9 and 3 Rough-winged Swallows on June 4 (Wierenga). Mark Wallace found 2 Tree Swallow nests in western Howard County on May 14, a county first. On May 29 Ringler found 5 Tree Swallow nests in bluebird houses on Carroll Island: one being built, 2 with eggs, and 2 with young. One of the sitting birds had been banded there as an adult two years before. On June 20, Armistead and Perry counted 16 Tree Swallows on Bloodsworth Island, the only southern bay island where they are known to breed. Mark Wallace found Cliff Swallows nesting in a barn at the Cissel Farm in Howard County. Wilkinson watched Cliff Swallows nesting at the old US 40 bridge over Evitts Creek in Allegany County, June 16. Bob Patterson saw nesting Cliff Swallows at the 6th St. and north Rt. 1 bridges in Laurel. About 75 nests were on the Westminster Pike bridge over the North Branch of the Patapsco River (Ringler). There were

numerous sightings of southbound swallows in July: 5 Trees at Sandy Pt. on the 29th (Wierenga), a Barn Swallow on the 15th and a Bank Swallow on the 16th at the Johns Hopkins Campus in Baltimore (Stasz), 2 Banks at Bellevue, July 3 (Armistead), 25 at Sandy Pt. on the 15th (Wierenga), 1 at St. Michaels on the 17th (Reese), and 3 at Pennyfield on the 26th (Wilson), a Rough-wing at Bellevue on the 5th (Armistead) and 75 at Sandy Pt. on the 15th with 25 Barns and 15 Purple Martins (Wierenga), Barns and martins on the 12th at the mouth of Baltimore harbor, and 200 Barn Swallows plus Cliff Swallows and martins on the 18th in the Belfast Valley (Kaestner).

Corvids, Nuthatches, Creepers. Kaestner noticed Blue Jays still migrating over northern Baltimore County on June 11. Wallace reported 3 Northern Ravens at Gambrill State Park, June 9. Wilkinson found a Fish Crow 2 miles east of Cumberland, June 11. A pair of White-breasted Nuthatches was feeding a fledged young at Liberty Reservoir, Baltimore Co., on June 13 (Ringler). Inez Glime noted another White-breast at Federalsburg on July 27 and 28. Dan Boone reported on several nesting locations of Brown Creepers including an adult feeding begging young in the Bear Swamp area of Wicomico County, on May 24, adults in two areas in Worcester County, and along the C & O Canal in Washington County, May 17. Wallace found one at Noland's Ferry, Frederick Co., June 21, and Wilkinson saw one in Wolf Swamp, June 29 and 30. All of these sightings are ample evidence of the continued increase of breeding creepers in the State.

Wrens, Bluebirds, Kinglets, Waxwings. Kraus found a Sedge Wren in the Calvert County marshes on June 21 and Resch heard one singing on Assateague on June 26. A pair of Eastern Bluebirds nested in an appropriate box on Carroll Island for the first time; the nest contained 5 eggs on May 16 and 29 (Ringler). Blom and Ringler found a pair of Golden-crowned Kinglets, including a singing male, near the Pennsylvania line in northern Carroll County, June 28. They were in an area of planted spruce, part of the Hanover watershed. The elevation here is only 775 feet and the location is far out of their normal range. The birds were present into July. Wilkinson found 5 Golden-crowned Kinglets in a Red Spruce-hemlock stand at Wolf Swamp in Garrett County, June 29 and 30. Aaron Marshall had a pair of Cedar Waxwings with a nest in his yard at Wittman, May 30 through June 7, but the birds later abandoned. Three waxwings at Oxford, July 30 (Reese, Allen), may have been early post-breeding wanderers.

Vireos, Warblers. A Yellow-throated Vireo was seen singing from a nest along Morgan Run in Carroll County, June 13 (Ringler, Blom), and another in the same county was feeding a fledged Brown-headed Cowbird near Liberty Reservoir, June 27 (Ringler, Wayne Gordon). One singing at Bellevue, July 19 (Armistead), was at an unusual place. George Fenwick reported seeing a Solitary Vireo on July 23 near Monkton, considerably out of range. A fledgling Black-and-white Warbler, recently out of the nest, was seen near Liberty Reservoir, Baltimore Co., June 13 (Ringler). The adult female gave an impressive distraction display at the feet of the observer. A Prothonotary Warbler was at Frog Hollow near Prettyboy Reservoir, May 31 (Stasz); this may be a new breeding location. Carol

Ghehelian of Charles County reported Prothonotary Warblers nesting in a bluebird house near Indian Head, June 1-10. Inez Glime found they began nesting in a bluebird house at Federalsburg on May 7 and the nest had 5 eggs on June 1. Wilson counted 6 Prothonotaries at Seneca, July 12. A fledgling Blue-winged Warbler was seen near Henryton, June 20 (Ringler, Blom). A Nashville continued singing throughout the summer at Carey Run Sanctuary (Boone, et al.). Jan Reese reported that a hatching-year Magnolia Warbler was found dead beneath a picture window near Oxford by Erica Woodman on the incredibly early date of July 15. A Yellow-rumped Warbler singing at Meadow Mountain Swamp, June 3 (Boone), was probably a late migrant. A Prairie Warbler nest with 4 young was found in shrubbery near the Baltimore side of Liberty Dam, June 27 (Ringler, Webb, Gordon). Alicia Knotts reported a Prairie at Denton, June 19-23. A Louisiana Waterthrush at Federalsburg, July 30 (Glime), may have been an early migrant. Stasz banded a Canada Warbler near Stevenson on June 4 and another was seen in Howard County near Glen Artney on June 6 (Alex Hammer).

Icterids. Bobolinks flying over the Belfast Valley on June 7 (Kaestner) and 3 over Fort Smallwood on June 9 (Wierenga) were late spring migrants. Fran Pope noted that a male Northern Oriole was at her suet feeder first on May 13 and continued several times per day for the rest of the month. A female seen occasionally on another suet bag at the rear of the house would not allow the male to share it with her. In addition the orioles were dominant over woodpeckers at the suet.

Finches. At Ft. McHenry, where few species nest, Bielenberg noted his last "migrant" Northern Cardinal on June 11. An adult male Rose-breasted Grosbeak was seen in northeastern Frederick County near Harney on July 19 (Ringler, Blom). Reese's comment about Blue Grosbeaks was that he had "never seen so many in previous two decades." Three male Dickcissels were seen in the small colony south of Buckeystown, June 21 through July 23 (Wallace); however, mowing of the fields in that area probably prevented successful nesting. A pair of Dickcissels with one fledgling were seen near Taneytown, July 19 (Blom, Ringler). A pair of House Finches was seen in Denton from June 18 through July (Nuttle) and probably nested in the area. Boone noted a Pine Siskin flying over Carey Run Sanctuary on June 1. Wilson found American Goldfinches occupying a nest 8-9 feet up in a white pine in Rockville, July 31; however, the nest was destroyed three days later. A fledgling Rufous-sided Towhee was out of a nest on Carroll Island on the early date of May 29 (Ringler). Paulus noted a Savannah Sparrow singing at the rouge lagoon in North Branch, June 14. The high count of Henslow's Sparrows along Elliott Island Road was 7 on June 6 (Wierenga). Armistead and Perry found single Sharp-tailed Sparrows on Bloodsworth Island and Adam Island on June 20 and Kraus found one in Calvert County, June 28. Wierenga saw 2 immature Seaside Sparrows at Sandy Pt. on July 29, though they do not nest there. A White-throated Sparrow was seen at College Park, June 5 (Ringler), and Jeff Bickart saw one at Lake Roland on June 30 and July 10, though it was certainly not breeding. A Swamp Sparrow was singing at Sandy Pt., June 19 (Wierenga), 3 were identified at Seneca, July 12 (Wilson); Kraus noted them throughout the summer in Calvert County.

Corrigendum - Jim Paulus corrects me on his sightings at the rouge lagoon, which is in North Branch, Allegany Co., not at Oldtown which is his residence. All of his waterbird reports from the lagoon have been erroneously attributed to Oldtown.

3501 Melody Lane, Baltimore, 21207

An open letter to Col. Leland S. DeVore

I have read with interest your "Potpourri for Non-sophisticated Birders" that appeared in the March 1975 issue of *Maryland Birdlife* (31: 44-46). Without question the modern tape recorder/player is a useful tool for the birder and student of birds. I have such a device, and I use it in the field. One of the many interesting studies that can be performed is determining the limits of a breeding bird's territory, and the prudent use of a recorded bird song is very helpful in such a study.

However, the improper and indiscriminate use of a tape recorder potentially can do damage. For example, I have little doubt that the frequent use of pre-recorded calls has been a major contributing factor to the virtual disappearance of the Swainson's Warbler from the immediate vicinity of the roads through the northern section of the Potomoke Swamp.

I must also take strong exception to your suggestion that birders play a pre-recorded call of the Screech Owl to attract birds. My objection is based on the following:

1) Birds should be seen, studied, and enjoyed in their natural habitat, insofar as possible. It is not natural to hear a Screech Owl calling in daylight, and it is not fair to the objects of our delight to upset them, for even a brief period, by playing a recorded call of a predator for a selfish reason.

2) I have witnessed on several occasions the severe abuse of the very technique that you recommend--unthinking birders playing an owl call so loudly that it could be heard a half mile away, disturbing not only the birds but other birders as well. Birds are not hard-of-hearing; in fact, they are quite sensitive to even faint sounds.

A birder doesn't need a "gimmick" to find and see birds. Study the records and tapes at home, and then leave your recorder at home with your dog. In the field, move about as slowly and as quietly as possible, making the least possible disturbance. Better still, sit quietly in the shade of a tree. You will be amazed at what you will see and learn when the birds are acting naturally.

Unless you have a specific useful purpose for your tape recorder/player, leave it and your owl tape at home.

Carroll E. Pinckard, Jr., 6601 Walther Avenue, Baltimore 21206

CROWS PEACEFULLY FEEDING WITH RED-SHOULDERED HAWKS

Sam Lyon

In view of the reputation crows have established for aggressive behavior toward birds of prey, the following recent observations from southern Prince Georges County, Maryland, are of interest.

On January 2, 1981, at 0900, near T.B., I observed three American Crows *(Corvus brachyrhynchos)* and one Red-shouldered Hawk *(Buteo lineatus)* feeding together on the ground on chicken backs that had been discarded from a store package. The four birds fed together within 30 feet of McKendree Road at a site where people occasionally throw litter. I watched the birds for six minutes from a distance of 50 yards, while the hawk was no more than five feet from the nearest crow. When a vehicle passed, all four birds flew to nearby trees. The hawk carried off a chicken back and left the site. I watched for another 20 minutes and only the crows returned. It was a mild overcast morning with the temperature about 30°F.

The second observation was at 1300 on January 16 on Thrift Road near Clinton. Chris Wagnon and I noticed two Red-shouldered Hawks in an oak tree, about 15 feet and 60 feet from the ground. Two American Crows were walking beneath the tree when something frightened them and they flew into the tree. One landed only three feet from one of the hawks, and the other crow alighted midway between the two hawks. The hawk and the crow that were on the same branch sat there for no more than two minutes, with no vocalizing; then the crow departed. The sky was mostly sunny, and the temperature was about 38°F.

The third sighting was made by naturalist Chris Wagnon at 0730 on February 4 at his home on Thrift Road near Clinton. Two American Crows and a Red-shouldered Hawk were feeding together at a site where Chris had discarded some fur and heads from butchered domestic rabbits on February 2. He watched the birds from within his house at a distance of 75 feet. The hawk was eating within five feet of the nearest crow for at least five minutes. The birds flew when Chris went out to photograph them. This was a partly cloudy day with the thermometer reading 14°F. Only the crows had been observed feeding at this site on the previous day.

I found these three sightings very atypical of my hawk-crow observations. Could cold weather and food scarcity be a common unity for birds that normally might keep their distance? Is it possible that hawks use crows to help locate winter food? At any rate, it was a treat to watch them in this behavior.

Clearwater Nature Center
11000 Thrift Road, Clinton, Md. 20735

FIRST PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF EARED GREBES IN MARYLAND

Eirik A. T. Blom

On April 7, 1981 at 1345, I located two Eared Grebes *(Podiceps nigricollis)* in Baltimore harbor. On subsequent days the birds were seen by many observers, and recognizable photographs were taken by Bob Ringler and Jim Stasz. This is the fourth record for Maryland, and the first documented record (photo or specimen). The birds were last seen on April 15.

When first seen the grebes were about 50 feet away. It was a cloudless day and the sun was behind me. I was using 10X binoculars and a 20-45X scope. One of the birds was in full breeding plumage except for some white on the breast. The other bird was molting into breeding plumage. The golden "ear" fan was visible but not complete. The crest on the forehead was partial. The neck and back were darker than typical winter plumage, but not fully black as in breeding plumage. No rusty color showed on the flanks.



Eared Grebes with Ruddy Ducks at Baltimore, April 8, 1981
Photo by Bob Ringler

The other bird showed full golden ears, completely black head and neck, and rusty flanks. The forehead crest was complete. The "ears" were fan-like in shape, ending in fine filoplumes. They started at the eyes and radiated back, above and below the eyes. The eyes of both birds were deep red. The bills were thin and dark. No Horned Grebes *(Podiceps auritus)* were in the area at the time, and no direct comparison was ever possible.

Though feeding almost continuously, the birds were rarely more than ten yards apart, and at times were observed courting. Courtship activity included bill-touching, head-bobbing, and pursuit. No vocalizations were heard, though I watched the birds for eight hours over a two-day period.

In the area at the same time were 1200 Ruddy Ducks *(Oxyura jamaicensis)*, 700 Lesser Scaup *(Aythya affinis)*, 50 American Coots *(Fulica americana)*, 16 Gadwalls *(Anas strepera)*, 15 Mallards *(Anas platyrhynchos)*, 12 Canvasbacks *(Aythya valisineria)*, 5 Black Ducks *(Anas rubripes)*, 3 Ring-necked Ducks *(Aythya collaris)*, 3 Buffleheads *(Bucephala albeola)*, 3 Red-breasted Mergansers *(Mergus serrator)*, 1 Pied-billed Grebe *(Podilymbus podiceps)*, and 1 winter-plumaged Red-throated Loon *(Gavia stellata)*.

Photographs taken on Saturday, April 4, of two grebes at the same location, following a field trip to the area, proved to be of Eared Grebes, although the birds had been identified as Horned Grebes at the time.

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